

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 002169

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EB AWAYNE, S/CT FOR MMILLER AND NEA/ARPI FOR
RSMYTH
MANAMA FOR OFAC ATTACHE JBEAL
NSC FOR PHEFFERNAN AND JHERRING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/15/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [KTFN](#) [EAD](#) [EFIN](#) [IO](#) [TC](#) [UAE](#)

SUBJECT: UAE CHARITY - HUMAN APPEAL INTERNATIONAL

REF: A. A) 2003 STATE 1392054

[B](#). B) 2003 STATE 79970

[C](#). C) 2003 ABU DHABI 2598

[D](#). D) 2005 ABU DHABI 864

[E](#). E) 2003 ABU DHABI 2598

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (S) Summary and Comment: Human Appeal International (HAI), headquartered in the Emirate of Ajman, is one of the most visible UAE international charities. Aware of ongoing U.S. concerns about HAI's activities and terror finance connections, Econoff visited HAI on April 25 and met with the founder and Secretary General of HAI, Salem Ahmed Abdul Rahman Al Nuaimi, to discuss HAI's structure and charitable endeavors. Al Nuaimi explained that HAI is a centralized organization, with the headquarters exercising oversight of the field and fundraising office activities, and it targets its efforts to health care, educational development, and emergency relief. The following snapshot of HAI is intended to inform Washington consumers about HAI's structure and activities. We note that it is based on comments from HAI officials directly to an Embassy officer. We cannot confirm or refute whether HAI's headquarters is aware that some of its staff has contributed financial support to individuals and entities associated with al-Qaida and Hamas. End summary and Comment.

Background

[2](#). (S) Prior to 2003, the Embassy raised concerns with the UAEG regarding HAI support for Chechen extremists. The UAEG quietly approached HAI, which took measures meant to ensure that its field branches ceased funding the Chechen groups of concern. In 2003, there were indications that HAI was sending financial support to organizations associated with Hamas and that members of its field offices in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Chechnya had connections to al-Qa'ida associates (refs A and B). The UAEG indicated its willingness to take action against HAI, but requested the USG provide them with a solid intel packet outlining the case against HAI (ref C). There was no further action on this track. In light of this history, Econoff visited the HAI headquarters in Ajman, but did not raise the above noted concerns about terror finance links.

Broad Charitable Endeavors

[3](#). (U) HAI is the third largest charitable organization in the UAE, behind the Red Crescent and Mohammed Bin Rashid Humanitarian and Charity Foundation (MBR Foundation), and it is closely associated with (and operates under the patronage of) the ruling family of Ajman Emirate. HAI's stated goal is to provide aid to needy families within the UAE and abroad. Its activities fall into five broad categories: health care, social development, orphan and child care, education, and urgent relief. According to Salem Ahmed Abdul Rahman Al Nuaimi, the founder and Secretary General of HAI, one of HAI's main international endeavors is orphan sponsorship. HAI has sponsored 23,000 orphans -- who HAI defines as children whose fathers have died -- providing them with food, education, and medical care. HAI has also built 24 schools, 412 educational centers, and 23 hospitals and clinics. HAI operates 30 mobile medical clinics, and it has dug over 600 wells. In addition, HAI reports that it has provided more than 40,000 tons of food, supplies, and charitable assistance to people in need in over 50 countries. In tsunami-stricken Sri Lanka, for example, HAI reports it has distributed over \$200,000 in food, medical equipment, and supplies.

[4](#). (U) HAI, which holds Category II consultative status in the United Nations Social and Economic Council, has carried out joint ventures with UNICEF, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. In order to work more

effectively, HAI sometimes partners with the MBR Foundation, the UAE Red Crescent, or local NGOs in recipient countries. In the Palestinian territories, for example, Al Nuaimi said that HAI works only with NGOs licensed by the Palestinian Authority.

HAI Activities in Iraq

15. (SBU) HAI reports it has extensive operations in Iraq -- ranging from distributing foodstuff, medicine, and school supplies, to building, supplying, and financing hospitals, schools, and refugee camps. In total, HAI reports it provided \$2.5 million in aid to Iraqi in 2003 and 2004.

16. (SBU) According to Al Nuaimi, HAI provides critical developmental and relief aid to the Iraqi people that other NGOs are unable to provide. As an example, the Iraqi Government approached HAI in January and asked for their assistance in aiding Iraqi Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Fallujah. After obtaining permission from the U.S. Marine Corps Civil-Military Operations Center (USMC/CMOC) in Fallujah, HAI established seven primary, intermediate, and secondary tent schools that serve 3200 students in the city. Al Nuaimi provided Econoff with copies of documents from the USMC/CMOC, and with the registration certificate from Iraq's Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, authorizing HAI to operate in Iraq.

Organizational Structure, Oversight

17. (SBU) Established in 1984, HAI is licensed by the Ajman municipality, not through the UAE Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (the federal ministry that licenses charitable organizations in the UAE). (Note: The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is aware of at least some of HAI's activities abroad. In an early April meeting, Undersecretary for Social Affairs Mariam Al Roumi told Econoff that HAI had sought the ministry's permission to set up operations in Iraq. In previous meetings Al Roumi stated that charities sending money abroad were required to go through one of the government-approved charities -- the UAE Red Crescent, the Sheikh Zayed Charitable Foundation, or the MBR Foundation (ref D). According to HAI's Al Nuaimi, this regulation does not apply to charities licensed by individual emirates. A thorough examination of the UAE's charity regulation and oversight regime -- and its vulnerabilities -- will be reported septel. End note.)

18. (U) HAI has three international fundraising offices -- in Britain, Denmark, and Australia -- and nine international field offices -- in Chechnya, Bosnia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Senegal, and Sudan. (Note: In 2003, the Mauritanian government closed the HAI office in Nouakchott because of its activities in support of terrorism -- ref E. End note.) In addition to its headquarters in Ajman, HAI has offices in the Emirates of Dubai, Umm Al Quwain, and Ras al Khaimah; HAI does not have an office in Abu Dhabi. Before initiating programs in any given country, HAI reports that it coordinates with the UAE Embassy in each country to identify areas where assistance is needed.

19. (U) Al Nuaimi said that HAI hires locals in each country to staff the field offices, and most of them come to the UAE for orientation and training at the HAI office in Ajman. He said the headquarters exercises oversight of the field offices' activities, noting that all money disbursed from a field office for a project must be authorized by the HAI headquarters, and all checks require two signatures. Al Nuaimi showed Econoff the records the organization keeps of its financial disbursements. In some cases, the recipient of the aid (for example, the mother of a child sponsored through their orphan program) is required to provide a fingerprint and signature to acknowledge receipt of the money. Al Nuaimi said that occasionally, fundraising offices send money directly to the field offices, but usually HAI requires that the money be routed through the Ajman headquarters first, and then the headquarters disburses the funds for specific projects. He was insistent that field offices are not authorized to take donations or raise money themselves.

110. (U) Al Nuaimi repeated several times his concern that the increasing number of regulations on charities and reporting requirements for charitable contributions are causing people to cease donating through established NGOs. Rather, they are finding informal ways of sending money, and "this unregulated flow of cash is difficult to monitor and track to be sure that it goes to the appropriate destination."

COMMENT

11. (S) During the meeting and visit to HAI, Al Nuaimi made a few comments to Econoff that merit further consideration:

-- Al Nuaimi took great pride in discussing HAI with a USG official. He spent much of the time explaining how the organization's oversight ensures that money is disbursed to legitimate projects. However, we note there is virtually no way to guarantee that field and fundraising officers are not taking cash donations under the table and diverting the money to individuals or groups with extremist connections.

-- HAI defines "orphans" as children whose fathers have died. Thus, the lauded "orphans" program could be going, at least in part, to families of killed -- or "martyred" -- extremists.

-- Al Nuaimi stated that HAI has 30 bank accounts in the UAE. He said this is to avoid incurring fees when money is transferred from one bank to another. Of interest, the HAI consultant sitting in on the meeting tried to explain that when Al Nuaimi said "30 accounts" he meant that HAI had one account that it could access at "30 different branches." Al Nuaimi was insistent, however, that he meant 30 different accounts. (Note: Under UAE law, a charity is only allowed to have one bank account. End note.)

-- Al Nuaimi told Econoff that Arab Bank PLC contacted HAI last month and asked the organization to close its account with the bank. Al Nuaimi said the bank told him that they were closing the accounts of all of their charities because the bank did not want to assume the risk associated with having accounts with charities.

12. (S) HAI is a large and influential charity in the UAE, with close ties to the ruling family in Ajman Emirate, and its charitable activities have a strong impact in needy areas of the world. The UAE Government is not likely to take any action against HAI without concrete information indicating the headquarters is complicit in terror financing activities; however, the UAEG has expressed staunch commitment to ensuring that its charities do not funnel money to terrorist associated individuals or entities. If the USG has a solid intelligence case against HAI to pass the UAEG, we believe the UAEG will take action in order to either shut down or rehabilitate the charity. Without recent, specific, credible, and releasable reporting, the UAE Government is not likely to act.

SISON